

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 2927

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MILI, FR, MO
SUBJ: DELIVERY OF F1 AIRCRAFT TO MOROCCAN GOVERNMENT

REF: STATE 123982 (NOTAL)

1. ORIGINAL PLANS FOR F1 DELIVERIES CALLED FOR THE FIRST 25 AIRCRAFT TO BE DELIVERED BETWEEN APRIL AND SEPTEMBER 1978, THE SECOND 25 BY APRIL 1979, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF 25 MORE FIGHTERS THROUGH 1980. THAT SCHEDULE IS OBVIOUSLY SLIPPING AS THERE ARE NO F1'S IN MOROCCO AT THIS TIME.

2. ALTHOUGH WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE RMAF HAS ACCEPTED THE FIRST TWO F1'S, THEY ARE BY NO MEANS OPERATIONAL SINCE THEY ARE STILL IN FRANCE FOR AIRCREW TRAINING. DELAYS IN REHABILITATION AND CONTRUCTION AT SIDI SLIMANE, THE EX-SAC BASE PLANNED TO BE USED FOR THE F1, ALONG WITH A SLOW RATE OF F1 PILOT SELECTION AND TRAINING, SUGGEST THAT A TRULY OPERATIONAL F1 CAPABILITY IS WELL IN THE FUTURE.

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3. WE BELIEVE THAT SPARE PARTS HAVE STARTED TO ARRIVE. PLANS ARE TO STORE THEM AT THE KENITRA AIR BASE, AGAIN BECAUSE OF DELAYS AT SIDI SLIMANE. THE CRITICAL QUESTION OF MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL TRAINING, WITHOUT WHICH PARTS ARE USELESS, REMAINS UP IN THE AIR. SINCE THE F1 IS A QUANTUM JUMP IN AVIONICS SOPHISTICATION FOR THE MOROCCANS, A LENGTHY PERIOD OF MAINTENANCE

TRAINING MAY ALSO DELAY COMBAT READY STATUS WHEN THE AIRCRAFT ARRIVE.

4. WE NOW EXPECT THE FIRST SIX TRAINED PILOTS AND SIX AIRCRAFT TO BE IN MOROCCO IN JUNE 1978. ALTHOUGH THESE AIRCRAFT WILL BE QUOTE OPERATIONAL UNQUOTE, WE BELIEVE MUCH OF THE EARLY EFFORT WILL BE DEDICATED TO TRAINING. IN ADDITION TO THE TRAINING OF MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL AS NOTED ABOVE, PILOT TRAINING WILL BE A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS. AT PRESENT FRENCH INSTRUCTORS ARE TRAINING NEW PILOTS IN THE F-5 AS MORE EXPERIENCED CREW MEMBERS ARE MOVED TO THE F-1. THE CURRENT MANNING LEVEL IN THE F-5 SQUADRON IS ABOUT 2:1 PILOTS PER AIRCRAFT (ABOUT 40 PILOTS FOR 19 F-5S) WHICH PROVIDES SOME SLACK. HOWEVER, CURRENT PRODUCTION AT MARRAKECH AND OVERAGES TO THE F-5 SQD. TO&E AT MEKNES WILL NOT PROVIDE SUFFICIENT PILOTS TO MAN THE F-1 OVER ONE PILOT PER AIRCRAFT UNTIL AT LEAST THE CY 80 TIME FRAME. ADDITIONALLY, FRENCH PILOTS WHO CAME TO MOROCCO TO SELECT THE FIRST SIX F-5 PILOTS FOR F-1 TRANSITION TRAINING REPORTEDLY FOUND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO GET SIX PILOTS THEY CONSIDERED GOOD ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE F1. THE FOLLOW-ON TRAINING AFTER THE FIRST SIX PILOTS AND AIRCRAFT ARE IN-COUNTRY THUS PROMISES TO BE A LONG AND DIFFICULT AFFAIR. THE EARLIEST WE ESTIMATE THE RMAF TO HAVE AN OPERATIONAL (COMBAT READY) F1 UNIT IS DURING THE FIRST HALF OF CY 1979. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE RMAF FEEL A NEED FOR AN IMMEDIATE SHORT-TERM OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY, THE FIRST SIX AIRCRAFT (OR SOME

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PORTION OF THEM) COULD BE MADE QUICKLY COMBAT READY PROVIDED MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL WERE TRAINED ON A CRASH BASIS OR FRENCH MAINTENANCE SUPPORT WERE RECIEVED. SUCH A MOVE WOULD, OF COURSE, DELAY THE LONG-TERM TRAINING OF PERSONNEL FOR F1 UNITS.

5. WHENEVER THE RMAF DOES FIELD AN F1 COMBAT UNIT, WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT CURRENTLY INTENDS TO USE THE AIRCRAFT AS A REPLACEMENT FOR THE F-5 IN THE GROUND ATTACK ROLE, ALTHOUGH THE F1 MAY BE SO CONFIGURED. ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE PLANNED LONG-TERM ROLE OF THE F1 WILL BE THE PRIMARY MISSION FOR WHICH IT WAS CONSTRUCTED, ALL-WEATHER INTERCEPTION AND AIR SUPERIORITY.

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